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# **“The people who are out of ‘right’ English”: Japanese university students' social evaluations of English language diversity and the internationalisation of Japanese higher education**

Robert M. McKenzie *Northumbria University*, Email: robert.mckenzie@northumbria.ac.uk

Alexander Gilmore *University of Tokyo*

Previous research indicates that evaluations of speech forms reflect stereotypes of, and attitudes towards, the perceived group(s) of speakers of the language/variety under consideration. This study, employing both implicit and explicit attitude measures, investigates 158 Japanese university students' perceptions of forms of UK, US, Japanese, Chinese, Thai and Indian English speech. The results show a general convergence between students' explicit and implicit attitudes, for instance, regarding US and UK English as the most correct, and solidarity with Japanese speakers of English. The findings are discussed in relation to intergroup relations between the traditional Japanese cohort and specific groups of overseas students, particularly in light of recent internationalisation policies adopted by many Japanese universities, and the resultant increase in international students from South and East Asia.

*Keywords:* sociolinguistics, language attitudes, language ideology, native vs. non-native speakers, linguistic discrimination

先行研究では、話し言葉の形式を評価する際には、対象となる言語（あるいは言語変種）を話していると認識されている集団に対する固定観念や態度が反映されている、と指摘されてきた。本研究では、日本人大学生158名を対象に、暗黙および明示的な態度を測定し、英国人、米国人、日本人、中国人、タイ人、インド人の話す英語の形式に対する意識を調査した。分析の結果、英米人の英語が最も正しいと認識され、日本人の英語には連帯感を覚えるなど、日本人大学生の持つ暗黙および明示的態度には、一般的な収束性が見られることが浮き彫りにされた。本研究は伝統的な日本人学生のグループと特定の外国人学生のグループの関連において論じられ、とりわけ多くの日本の大学で近年加速する国際化、およびその結果としての南および東アジア諸国からの学生の増加傾向が考慮されている。

キーワード: 社会言語学, 言語態度, 言語観念形態, 母語話者 対 非母語話者, 言語差別

## **Introduction**

Japanese higher education, internationalisation and the Global 30/Top Global University Project

Forming part of a wider strategy aiming to internationalise the education system in Japan (*kyoiku no kokusaika*) and most especially the internationalisation of the higher educational sector, the Japanese Government recently conceived a plan to increase the number of overseas students enrolled on courses at Japanese universities to 300,000 by 2020. The most developed realisation of the plan has been the formulation and partial implementation of the Global 30 Project, a scheme which encompassed the selection of 13 (rather than 30) top-ranking Japanese universities to serve as ‘core institutions’ offering ‘English-only’ degree programmes to overseas students who lack sufficient proficiency in the Japanese language (MEXT, 2010). A secondary aim of the Project is to provide opportunities for the domestic cohort of Japanese students to study course content in English (Burgess et al., 2010).

Stringent recruitment targets, requiring an increase of between 3,000 and 8,000 overseas students for each university selected, depending on the size of the institution, were stipulated for the initial five-year funding period (MEXT, 2010). Interestingly, through the Top Global University Project, announced in 2014, the Japanese Government has extended financial support to a total of 37 universities to ‘press forward with comprehensive internationalization and university reform’ in Japan (MEXT, 2014: 1). These institutions were categorised into

two types: 13 ‘Top Type’ establishments perceived to have the potential to be ranked in the top 100 universities in the world (including Tokyo University, Kyoto University, Keio University and Waseda University) and 24 ‘Global Traction Type’ universities to ‘lead the internationalization of Japanese society’ (MEXT, 2014: 1) (including Chiba University, Ritsumeikan University and Hosei University).

There appear to be two distinct reasons behind the desire to increase the number of overseas nationals studying at universities in Japan. First, given the fall in birth rate in Japan over the last 20 years and the projected continuation of its decline, and the resultant fall in the Japanese student intake, the recruitment of greater numbers of students from overseas seems essential for the maintenance of the quality or, for some of the more lowly ranked, the very survival of the universities themselves. Secondly, Japanese business groups have repeatedly emphasised the potential boost which an expansion in the number of foreign university students can bring to the Japanese economy (Burgess et al., 2010), especially through the resulting increased use of English within Japanese companies which later employment of these highly proficient foreign nationals could bring. Thus, overseas students are thought to represent a potential catalyst to internationalise the business environment and to strengthen the international competitiveness of Japanese firms, overwhelmingly involved in hi-tech manufacturing, and operating in increasingly globalised markets (Hashimoto, 2013). It is presumably for this reason the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology (MEXT) specifically lists ‘promoting the social acceptance of (overseas) students’ as one of its main aims of the Global 30 Project (MEXT, 2009: 15). Presumably, a central tenet of such social acceptance involves the holding of favourable attitudes by the Japanese student cohort towards (groups of) international students.

One notable feature of the composition of the overseas students currently enrolled on Japanese university courses is that the vast majority are from East Asia and South Asia. The most up-to-date official figures at the time of writing, for 2013, indicate that out of a total of 137,756 international students attending universities in Japan, 91.9% were from Asia with, for example: 81,884 students from China (60.4% of the total number of students); 4,719 from Taiwan (3.5%); 15,304 from South Korea (11.3%), 2,383 from Thailand (1.8%); 560 from India (0.4%); 875 from Bangladesh (0.6%) and 794 from Sri Lanka (0.5%) (Japan Student Services Organisation, 2014). The large proportion of students from South Asia and East Asia has led some to conclude that Japanese higher education is currently undergoing a process of ‘Asianisation’ as opposed to ‘internationalisation’ (Askew, 2011). Against this backdrop, and given the projected rise in numbers of non-Japanese students (see above), it seems worthwhile to investigate domestic students attitudes towards different national groups of overseas students attending Japanese universities, and most especially towards those cohorts of students who come from a select few countries in the South and the East of Asia. The findings of such research, it is felt, could help researchers better understand potentially changing intergroup relations (Tajfel, 1981) between different student cohorts within universities in Japan and, in turn, may provide some insight into the potential success (or not) of the internationalisation of Japanese higher education.

#### Attitudes towards linguistic variation in educational contexts

It has long been known that listeners, based solely upon voice, are generally able to estimate a range of speaker attributes, such as their gender, ethnicity, approximate age or emotional state (e.g., Kreiman and Sidts, 2011). Moreover, since language variation is socially structured within speech communities, and because different speech forms of a given language index membership of specific social, national or ethnic groups, there is also considerable evidence demonstrating that non-linguists are willing to evaluate speech and, in

turn, to assign a range of personality traits to the group(s) to which the speakers are perceived to belong (Giles and Watson, 2013). It is for precisely this reason that lay attitudes towards different language varieties can have important social implications including: influencing job interview outcome (Rakic, Steffens and Mummendey, 2011); the perceived innocence or guilt of court defendants (Dixon and Mahoney, 2004); access to municipal housing (Zhao, Ondrich and Yinger, 2006); and the acceptance/stigma of specific immigrant groups (Gluszek and Dovidio, 2010).

Research has also indicated that folk perceptions of speech varieties have a particular impact within educational contexts, where from the very beginnings of folklinguistic research it has been demonstrated, for instance, that attitudes towards linguistic diversity can affect secondary schoolteachers' perceptions of students' abilities (e.g., Seligman, Tucker and Lambert, 1972) or more broadly, that speakers of denigrated minority languages, non-standard varieties or non-native forms are often denied equal access to higher education when compared to speakers of dominant languages or standard native varieties (Ryan and Giles, 1982). However, the majority of studies specifically comparing and contrasting attitudes towards L1 and L2 speech within higher educational settings have been conducted in the US. The findings have generally indicated that US-born university students rate native and non-native speakers of English differently, with the more 'foreign' the English is perceived, the less favourably the speakers are rated in terms of status and social attractiveness (e.g., Rubin and Smith, 1990; Pantos and Perkins, 2013). It is worth noting that the most stigmatised evaluations are frequently reserved for speakers of English from Latin America or East Asia, regardless of level of proficiency in the language, with the English speech of individuals of 'European descent' rated broadly similarly to standard forms of US English (Lindemann, 2003; Cargile, Maeda, Rodriguez, and Rich 2010).

A number of studies also exist which examine Japanese university students' perceptions of English language diversity. For instance, using the verbal-guise technique (VGT) (see below), Cargile, Takai and Rodriguez (2006) conducted a study examining 113 Japanese undergraduates attitudes towards two US speech varieties, California (standard) English and African-American vernacular English (AAVE). Whilst no significant differences were found between the students' ratings of the speech forms in terms of social attractiveness, the California speech was evaluated significantly more positively than AAVE in terms of status and, in turn, correctness. In a series of in-depth studies, McKenzie (2008a, 2010) investigated 558 Japanese undergraduate and postgraduate students' attitudes towards specific standard and non-standard varieties of US and Scottish English speech as well as moderately-accented (MJE) and heavily-accented (HJE) forms of Japanese English. The results obtained suggest that participants tended to evaluate the non-standard and standard US and UK speech more positively in terms of prestige when compared to the Japanese English speech. In contrast, in terms of social attractiveness, the heavily-accented Japanese English speech was rated significantly more favourably in comparison with the other speech forms, with the standard varieties of US English and Scottish English particularly downgraded. Furthermore, a large number of the Japanese listeners indicated that it was specific segmental features of the speech presented for evaluation, e.g., the rhoticity of Scottish English speech, which were largely responsible for their evaluations. Sasayama (2013) played a series of speech samples of Japanese English and (unspecified) forms of US English to 44 Japanese university students. Again, the results demonstrated that the students tended to evaluate US English more highly in terms of correctness but Japanese English more favourably in terms of social attractiveness.

Taken together, the findings from these studies, concentrating specifically on social evaluations of different varieties of English, have demonstrated that Japanese university

students generally view standard and non-standard varieties of English spoken in the US and in the UK as the most correct and, in turn, their speakers as the most prestigious, but express greater levels of solidarity with (speakers of) Japanese English. Nevertheless, there do not appear to have been any in-depth studies undertaken examining the social evaluations of Japanese university students towards different forms of non-native as well as native forms of English, other than Japanese English. As described previously, this is perhaps surprising considering the recent internationalisation policies adopted by many elite and medium ranking universities in Japan, as well as the recent rise in student numbers from the South and East of Asia, the majority of whom speak English as an L2, and who enrol on an ever-increasing number of courses taught in English at Japanese universities. It is likely that research specifically examining Japanese students' attitudes towards the different forms of English spoken within these Asian countries would also provide valuable insights into attitudes towards the speakers of these varieties.

Traditionally, researchers have employed direct measures to determine individuals' explicit attitudes, i.e., those evaluations which are fully aware and self-reportable (Greenwald and Banaji, 1995). However, social psychologists have recently developed innovative indirect measures to determine individuals' implicit attitudes, i.e., unconscious evaluations, automatically activated without their attention or conscious recognition, and thus not considered verbally-reportable (Fazio and Olsen, 2003; Nosek, 2007), towards a range of stimuli. The results of studies employing these measures have frequently confirmed that implicit and explicit attitudes diverge, thought to result from the capturing of two very different representations of attitudes by the two different tests. This is particularly the case for individuals' responses to strong attitude objects such as race, where evaluations are likely to be characterised by well-learned associations (Payne, Burkley, and Stokes, 2008) and amongst communities where racial prejudice and ethnic stereotyping is less likely to result in overt discrimination or behaviour since there exists social norms inhibiting their expression (Biernat and Dovidio, 2003). Since attitudes towards linguistic diversity are also likely to be strong (McKenzie, 2010), it is interesting, to date, very few studies have been undertaken comparing implicit and explicit attitudes towards specific languages and language varieties.

Although not conducted in Japan, a recent sociolinguistic study employing the use of both implicit and explicit attitude measures was conducted by McKenzie (in press) amongst 194 UK-born university students' in the north-east of England, the vast majority of whom were born and raised in the region. The explicit study examined attitudes towards linguistic diversity more broadly whilst the implicit study measured attitudes towards 2 'local' varieties of English speech spoken in the north of the UK (Tyneside English and Scottish Standard English) as well as 4 forms of L2 English spoken in the South and East of Asia (Japanese English, Thai English, Chinese English and Indian English). The results demonstrated that participants' explicit attitudes towards linguistic diversity tended to be positive. In contrast, when presented with speech stimuli, students' implicit attitudes were found to be significantly more positive towards the native forms of English spoken in the north of the UK when compared to the evaluations across all 4 forms of Asian English speech presented, on both status and solidarity dimensions. McKenzie concluded that the UK-born students' more favourable ratings of both forms of English spoken in the UK were to a large extent based on expressions of solidarity with the perceived speakers of these speech varieties. It was felt that the participants' broad denigration of the non-native forms of English under consideration pointed to an active outgrouping of specific groups of (Asian) international students.

In light of the above discussion, the present study examines Japanese university students' implicit and explicit attitudes towards specific forms of English spoken in Japan and elsewhere in East Asia and South Asia as well as in the USA and the UK. In this way,

since the use of a particular speech variety can convey a vast amount of social information regarding the speaker, and 50 years of language attitude research has demonstrated that attitudes towards specific varieties of speech strongly reflect attitudes towards the perceived group membership of the speakers (see above), it is felt that the present study will aid understanding of Japanese students' social stereotypes of overseas students' national identities. In turn, given the large numbers of Asians studying in Japanese universities, it is hoped that the findings will help provide a deeper insight into the potential success (or not) of the internationalisation of Japanese higher education (see also Yonezawa, 2010).

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The sample consisted of 158 Japanese nationals studying at six national and private universities in the Kanto, Kansai or Kyushu areas of Japan. When the fieldwork was undertaken, three of these institutions were involved in the Global 30 Project. All participants had studied English for at least 8 years previously and were studying the language at the time of the fieldwork (mean age=20.35, SD=2.03).

### **Implicit measures**

It was felt that the inclusion of the implicit measure would help provide information regarding those aspects of attitudes towards forms of English speech which are not open to introspection or explicit identification as well as minimise conscious response biases (Bohner and Dickel, 2011). Implicit attitudes towards the language varieties of different forms of L2 and L1 English were measured by means of a verbal-guise instrument. The verbal-guise technique (VGT) involves the elicitation of listener responses to different recordings of speech stimuli for a number of personality traits. Traditionally, the traits, together with their antonyms, are positioned at either end of a 5 or 7 point semantic-differential scale. To provide a more detailed measurement of listener ratings, a magnitude estimation technique (Stevens, 1971; Sorace, 2010) was employed in the present study. Thus, rather than rating each of the speech varieties on a traditional semantic-differential scale, participants were instead requested to record their evaluations along a line of 80 points for each of the 8 sets of traits (see Appendix A). To ensure that the traits were meaningful for participants (see Garrett, 2010), the adjectives employed to form the semantic-differential scale were the same as those utilised in prior studies examining Japanese university students' attitudes towards diversity within spoken English, where traits were collected amongst comparable participants in a pre-test study (see McKenzie, 2008a, 2008b, 2010).

### *Speech stimuli*

From a much larger corpus of digital-audio recordings of seven varieties of English, created by the researchers for the specific purpose of evaluation, speech samples provided by seven female speakers were chosen as stimuli. Each of the samples employed was selected as most representative (i.e., prototypical) of the speech form in question by at least 3 other speakers of that particular variety of English. Four of the samples were provided by speakers of L2 forms of English spoken in Asia: Japanese English (JE); Thai English (TE); Chinese English (CE); and Indian English (IE). Each of the speakers from Asia had learned English as an L2 and, at the time the recordings were made, all had attained a postgraduate degree, undertaken in English. Three samples of L1 English were also included for the purposes of evaluation: Southern United States English (SUSE); (Standard) Mid-West United States English (MWUSE); and Scottish Standard English (SSE). These 7 speech varieties were selected

specifically as stimuli since it was felt many Japanese users of English would be familiar with these forms of English and/or because the findings gained from their inclusion, in the case of the L1 varieties, would also enable comparison with the results of equivalent language attitude studies previously conducted amongst university students in Japan and elsewhere. To facilitate spontaneous speech stimuli, all speakers were recorded giving directions on the same fictitious map. In this way, it was possible to ensure that the spoken texts were as factually-neutral as possible (see Clark and Schleef, 2010). To control for age as a potential confound, the ages of the seven speakers were relatively similar, ranging from 23 to 27. The speech samples were also broadly similar in length, ranging between 64 seconds (IE speaker) and 89 seconds (JE speaker).

### Explicit measures

The original objective of the explicit attitude study was to gather evaluative comments about 'Asian English speech' amongst Japanese university students. However, the descriptions obtained during the pilot study, involving comparable Japanese students, demonstrated 'Asian English' was a problematic term for many and, in contrast, 'non-native English' was much more meaningful. It also became clear that participants involved in the pilot study frequently wished to provide descriptions of the *speakers* of non-native English in addition to descriptions of non-native English speech. Thus, following the work of Coupland and Bishop (2007) into explicit attitudes towards linguistic diversity in the UK, an explicit self-report measure requested that the same 158 participants who participated in the verbal-guise study describe '(speakers of) non-native English speech'. To avoid any confusion, a Japanese translation of the above statement was also provided.

### Procedure

The data was collected in lecture theatres at the participating universities in Japan in summer 2012 and summer 2013. To control for potential ordering effects, the presentation of the speech samples in the verbal-guise study was randomised.

## Results and discussion

### Implicit attitudes

First, analysis was undertaken to calculate mean values for participants' speaker ratings for each of the 8 traits. To locate the evaluative dimensions within the data, Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was then conducted on these means. The analysis confirmed the existence of two distinct evaluative dimensions, consistent with previous similar language attitude research, jointly responsible for 57.9% of the variance: *status* (24.5%) and *social attractiveness* (33.4%). Since the fluent trait loaded on both dimensions (see Appendix B), it was suppressed from the subsequent analysis.

ANOVA analysis (with Bonferroni post hoc testing) was subsequently conducted to compare the overall mean ratings for both traits, where a significant effect was found for both Status  $F(6,152)=23.08$ ,  $p<0.0001$ , eta squared=0.477 and Social Attractiveness  $F(6,152)=25.24$ ,  $p<0.0001$ , eta squared=0.499.

**Table 1.** Mean ratings and standard deviations for *Speaker Status*: descending order of evaluation (N=158)

Speech variety	Mean	Standard deviation
Southern United States English*	49.53	12.1
Mid-West United States English	44.28	12.8
Scottish Standard English	44.24	11.2
Japanese English	43.01	11.1
Thai English*	41.93	10.9
Chinese English	37.77	11.8
Indian English	36.64	10.3

\*indicates a significant difference in comparison with the variety directly underneath ( $p < 0.05$ )

Highest possible mean score=80, lowest possible score=1.

As detailed in Table 1 above, when the overall ratings for the status dimension are compared, the rankings demonstrate that the Japanese students judged the varieties of English spoken in US and the UK more positively than all 4 forms of Asian English speech, with a particular preference for standard and non-standard US English. This preference for L1 forms of English in terms of status is consistent with the results of the limited number of similar studies undertaken previously, where evidence was found to indicate that Japanese university students are more positive towards US and UK English in comparison with Japanese English. However, the results of the present study serve to clarify the findings of earlier research by indicating, in terms of status, that other forms of English spoken in Asia are also downgraded. Indeed, when the mean evaluations of the 4 Asian forms of English are compared, a clear preference is expressed for Japanese English (and statistically significant from Chinese English and Indian English, see Appendix C). This result suggests, for the first time, the existence of a more nuanced hierarchy of status ratings amongst Japanese students: with varieties of L1 English the most preferred; followed by the listeners' own form of English, i.e., Japanese English; and other L2 forms of English spoken in the South and East of Asia the least preferred.

**Table 2.** Mean ratings and standard deviations for *Speaker Social Attractiveness*: descending order of evaluation (N=158)

Speech variety	Mean	Standard deviation
Japanese English	51.65	10.5
Southern United States English	50.96	11.6
Scottish Standard English	47.65	11.9
Thai English *	46.70	11.8
Chinese English	41.70	11.8
Mid-West United States English	41.08	14.4
Indian English	40.51	10.5

\*indicates a significant difference in comparison with the variety directly underneath ( $p < 0.05$ )

Highest possible mean score=80, lowest possible score=1.

The social attractiveness rankings detailed in Table 2 demonstrate that Japanese English was judged the most positively amongst all the speech forms under consideration, and significantly more favourably than Scottish English, Thai English, Chinese English, Mid-West US English and Indian English speech (see Appendix D). This result suggests a high degree of solidarity (i.e., ingroup loyalty) with the Japanese speaker, and is again consistent with the results of previous language attitude research investigating Japanese students' attitudes towards different forms of English speech, where identifiable forms of Japanese English were found to be salient markers of ingroup identity and accordingly, were also rated very favourably (McKenzie, 2010, Sasayama, 2013). The rankings also indicate that whilst ratings of Southern US English and Scottish Standard English are relatively high, evaluations of the standard variety of US English presented, i.e., MWUSE, are significantly lower. Previous equivalent research conducted by McKenzie (2008b) also found that Japanese



students' downgraded MWUSE on social attractiveness dimensions, despite relatively high levels of conscious recognition of the speech variety. McKenzie (2008b) attributed this result to Japanese nationals' negative evaluations of the power and influence which speakers of standard US English hold within Japan where: there exists a (post 1945) tendency for standard forms of US English to provide the models and norms for English language use in the country; US movies and US news, involving predominantly speakers of standard US English, continue to dominate the English language media in Japan; and there remains a large US military presence in Kanagawa, Okinawa and Aomori (see McKenzie, 2008c, 2013). The results of the present study, thus, appear to confirm Japanese university students' particular underlying aversion to the perceived speakers of this variety of English.

Overall, the participants' mean ratings for each of the forms of English speech stimuli, besides MWUSE, were found to be more positive on the social attractiveness dimension when compared to the status dimension, suggesting that Japanese university students' hold especially intense attitudes towards the prestige and, in turn, correctness of English speech. Moreover, evaluations of Indian English and, to a lesser extent, Chinese English were found to be considerably more negative in comparison with the ratings for the other English varieties on both status and social attractiveness dimensions. This result strongly suggests (speakers of) these two forms of English are especially stigmatised by Japanese students and likely reflections of wider negative stereotyping (linguistic and otherwise) of, leading to discrimination against, Indian and Chinese nationals within Japanese society more generally (e.g., Lie, 2001; Sugimoto, 2010). Indeed, there is evidence suggesting that, within Japan, the Indian community is often associated with lower status employment and poverty and the Chinese have long been linked with involvement in criminal gangs (see Gottlieb, 2006; Pollack, 2000; Siddle, 2014).

### Explicit attitudes

Analysis was also conducted on the qualitative evaluative responses provided by the Japanese university students to the question 'how would you describe (speakers of) non-native English speech?' Theoretical thematic analysis was employed as a method to identify, analyse and report important patterns within the responses. This decision was taken because previous research in the Social Sciences more broadly has indicated that theoretical thematic analysis is particularly useful as a method where, as in the case of the present study, the question(s) asked are very specific, explicit responses are provided by a large number of participants and the researcher(s) collected the data in face-to-face interactions (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Initial analysis of the 158 participants' qualitative responses involved their categorisation into negative, positive or neutral evaluations. Whilst both unfavourable and favourable comments about non-native English speech were expressed, the largest category of responses were negative (51.3%), followed by positive evaluations (29.1%), with a much lower percentage of neutral responses (10.1%). Fifteen participants (9.5%) declined to offer any response; an interesting finding given that all 158 participants completed the other parts of the research instrument, including the much lengthier implicit verbal-guise study. In light of further fine-grained analysis, the section below details and discusses the range of themes and sub-themes within the negative, positive and neutral evaluations. To provide exemplification, representative responses, quoted verbatim, are detailed for each of the themes (participant case numbers in parentheses).

### *Negative talk about non-native English speech*

Two related themes were identified, incorrectness (24.7% of total responses) and lack of intelligibility (26.6%).

*Non-native English speech is incorrect:*

For many participants, the English spoken by L2 users is problematized as incorrect in comparison with those varieties employed by native speakers of the language. Indeed, several participants equated non-native with non-standard speech.

*The people that are out of 'right' English (93)*

*I want to learn standard English, so I want to hear native English (76)*

For some, whilst identifying themselves as non-native users of English, listening to the English of L2 speakers induced explicitly negative emotions.

*It's irritating. I want them to learn English in the right way. However, I am a speaker too, so I have to learn right way (81)*

*Not as clear as native for me. I need to concentrate more so I don't feel comfortable (66)*

The most frequent reasons given for the judgements of non-native English speech as incorrect were lack of fluency and/or 'pronunciation problems' (rather than issues associated with lexical or morpho-syntactic features).

*People who speak English with incorrect pronunciation, not clearly (59)*

*Not smooth. Broken (114)*

Several participants also identified specific areas where English, spoken by non-native speakers of the language, is rated more positively or less positively, and deemed more correct or less correct.

*I enjoy the varieties of English. However, I am sometimes frustrated by the English spoken by Asian people (83)*

*Asian speaker English is not correct and not fluent (18)*

*Europeans tend to be more fluent and have better pronunciation compared to Asians (74)*

*Asian's English is often not good. Of course, includes me (123)*

The above comments point to perceptions of 'Asian' English speech as incorrect and forms of English spoken by 'Europeans' as more correct L2 English. Given that for some Japanese participants, 'Asian English' seems to include the English spoken in Japan (see above), such comments suggest a degree of linguistic insecurity since this is precisely the form of English which many are themselves likely to employ. This is consistent with the results of previous research conducted amongst Japanese university students by McKenzie (2008b), where English speech stimulus provided by a highly proficient Japanese national, when categorised incorrectly as 'European' was judged significantly more positively in terms of status than when identified correctly as Japanese.

*Non-native English speech lacks intelligibility:*

L2 English speech was also frequently perceived as less easy to understand when compared to L1 English. Comments frequently emphasised the great efforts required in understanding the English of non-native speakers.

*People who speak weird English. Very hard for me to understand what they are*

*speaking (64)*

Several participants attributed the general lack of intelligibility of non-native English speech, besides Japanese English, specifically to limited previous exposure to forms of L2 speech. Phonological features employed by L2 speakers of English were perceived to be especially difficult to comprehend.

*I feel difficult to catch the sound of non-native varieties of English except Japanese English (126)*

*I learned only native English (especially American) so non-native English is difficult to understand and is unfamiliar with me (148)*

*r, t sounds difficult, complicated (127)*

The most plausible reason for these perceptions of higher levels of intelligibility of and familiarity with native English speech, particularly varieties of English spoken in the United States, relates to greater levels of exposure amongst Japanese students to L1 forms of English at all levels of the Japanese educational system. For instance, within Japanese university classrooms, lecturers in English tend to select US and UK varieties of English as listening materials. In Japanese secondary schools too, Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), recruited to teach English through the Japanese Government's JET Programme, tend to be from North America, the British Isles or the Australian subcontinent (see Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme, 2014 for most recent statistics).

Comments relating to greater levels of familiarity with forms of Japanese and US speech are again consistent with previous research involving Japanese university students, where high levels of accurate identification were demonstrated from English speech stimuli provided by speakers of English from Japan and from the South and Mid-West of the USA (McKenzie, 2008b; Sasayama, 2013).

#### *Positive talk about non-native English speech*

Detailed analysis of the participants' qualitative responses again generated 2 positive themes surrounding NNE speech: ease of intelligibility (10.1% of total responses) and indexical of particular linguistic, cultural and national identities (19.0%).

Non-native English speech is more intelligible:

In direct contrast with negative responses detailing a lack of the intelligibility, a number of participants commented explicitly upon the ease of understanding of the utterances made by L2 English speakers.

*I can easily hear the words if people who are non-native speaker speak English (17)*

*They speak English not so rapid, so I can hear and understand what they want to tell (147)*

*It is easy to understand because each word is independent (146)*

*No problem to catch I think because speak more slowly and use less words from standard English (121)*

Whilst such comments are indeed positive, it is notable that, for some participants, the greater intelligibility of L2 English speech seems based upon a deficit model, whereby non-native users of English are often perceived to speak a simplified version of English, most especially relating to speech rate and connected speech.

Non-native English speech indexes different linguistic, cultural and national identities:

The largest unit of analysis (i.e., theme) identified amongst participants' positive responses constituted descriptions of different forms of L2 English as reflections of group identity and for many, that wider exposure to spoken forms of English were an aid to cultural understanding.

*Unique accent of speakers of each country (15)*

*Interesting. We can know or see their culture (111)*

*We have many countries in the world so useful (112)*

*I think studying non-native English is excellent to understand the world (95)*

In turn, some participants emphasised that the opportunity for increased cultural awareness induced positive emotions when listening to L2 English speech.

*Their pronunciation is characteristic. Interesting and exciting (42)*

For some Japanese students, positive feelings towards non-native English speech extended to explicit expressions of ingroup loyalty with speakers of these forms of English, and these comments may help explain the higher social attractiveness ratings for the Japanese English speaker and, to a lesser extent for the Thai English speaker, found in the verbal-guise study.

*Like me, they are learning English. Hard working and intelligent (19)*

*I'm Japanese, the speakers are similar to me (154)*

It seems evident from the 2 themes of positive talk identified that some Japanese university students, when asked directly, evaluated forms of L2 English and their speakers positively. There appear to be two distinct reasons behind these favourable attitudes. First, since many comments indicate that these participants generally consider L2 English as more simplified, if incorrect, forms of the language in comparison with native English varieties (see above), L2 English speech offers a greater ease of comprehension. Secondly, and more positively, the responses suggest an acceptance of L2 English speech as legitimate forms of the language. Indeed, for these participants, diversity within English reflects cultural diversity and thus, exposure to a greater range of English speech, whether uttered by L1 or L2 speakers of the language, was perceived to offer opportunities to gain understanding of the particular linguistic, national and social identities of the communities of which the speakers are perceived to hold membership.

#### *Neutral talk about non-native English speech*

Whilst the question of whether attitudes can ever be completely neutral remains controversial, the comments provided by the participants in this section (10.1)% of total responses) can be considered neutral in the sense that they are principally descriptions of the linguistic features of the speech rather than social evaluations of the speakers. Again, comments regarding the pronunciation of L2 English speakers featured most prominently.

*All people have a distinctive accent (92)*

Some participants perceived an influence of the speakers' L1 on their English, with several again stressing distinctions between different forms of L2 English.

*These varieties come from accent or vocabulary of their native tongue (65)*

*They speak with their own rhythms, pronunciation and strongly influenced by their mother tongue (86)*

## Conclusion

Folk perceptions of languages and language varieties are powerful influences upon the social judgements of individuals, even in comparison with their physical attributes. Accordingly, lay rhetoric surrounding language diversity, and the subsequent stigmatisation (and elevation) of specific linguistic forms, can have important social consequences for speakers, both in Japan and elsewhere. Arguably, as described previously, linguistic discrimination is especially impactful within educational settings. The present study focussed upon Japanese university students' implicit attitudes towards speakers of 7 different forms of L1 and L2 English. In addition, the same participants provided explicit evaluative comments of non-native English speech. The explicit and implicit findings appear convergent in a number of areas, for instance, regarding perceptions of L1 forms of spoken English, and specifically US English, as the most correct. Both sets of findings also point to relatively unfavourable evaluations of the *status* of speech perceived as L2 English, and most especially forms of English spoken in Asia, including Japanese English. The explicit comments also indicate that it is phonological features which are most likely to act as vocal cues for the identification of speech as L2 English and, in turn, index negative evaluations of the correctness of these English speech forms. More positively, there is strong evidence from both the implicit and explicit responses demonstrating solidarity with fellow Japanese speakers of English. The consistency found between implicit and explicit attitude ratings, where a clear tendency was found for participants to evaluate (speakers) of different forms of South and East Asian English negatively, with the exception of Japanese English, points to an absence of social desirability bias in the explicit evaluations and indicates that Japanese students' attitudes towards these speech forms are strong, relatively stable and resistant to change (see Karpen, Jia and Rydell, 2011).

The comments collected during the explicit attitude study frequently highlighted limited exposure to forms of L2 English spoken by non-Japanese. These comments regarding the relative lack of familiarity and in turn, solidarity with such speech forms, may help explain the generally unfavourable status and social attractiveness evaluations afforded to the 3 speakers of English from elsewhere in Asia in the verbal-guise study. This result parallels the findings of previous variety recognition research amongst Japanese university students conducted by McKenzie (2008b), where it was demonstrated that when listeners could not consciously name the provenance of English speakers from stimuli, there was a tendency to rank the speech less favourably (see also above). The low evaluations found in the present study are somewhat worrisome given the aforementioned current prevalence of and projected increase in numbers of students attending Japanese universities from the South and East of Asia.

Accordingly, because language attitudes are reliable indicators of attitudes towards particular communities of speakers, the results of the study suggest broadly negative intergroup relations between the Japanese cohort and groups of Asian students, thus questioning the extent to which the great majority of overseas students are socially accepted (see above) and able to fully acculturate, both psychologically and culturally (see Berry, 2005), into the Japanese university system. Burgess et al. (2010) note that this situation is currently a social reality for many international students in Japan. Rather, the findings point to overseas students' likely psychological segregation and isolation, with associated undue effects upon their self-esteem and positive identity (Abrams and Hogg, 1999; Harwood, Giles and Palomares, 2005) as well as potentially prolonged levels of acculturative stress (Smith and Khawaja, 2011). Hence, as detailed above, since attitudes towards specific languages and language varieties reflect social judgements of the perceived groups of speakers, the findings

of the present study thus provide rather negative evidence regarding the potential success of the future internationalisation of Japanese higher education more broadly.

More specifically, the results indicate a particular downgrading of Indian and Chinese speakers of English in terms of both status and social attractiveness, a finding which may be explained through the long tradition of negative stereotyping within the Japanese media of Indian and Chinese nationals (see above). Given the growing middle class and increasing demand for overseas university education amongst the populations of both countries, evidence pointing to Japanese students' negative attitudes towards Indian and Chinese students seems especially problematic. The findings of the present study also mirror, to some extent, the results found in McKenzie's (in press) research amongst UK university students. This is especially the case regarding the results gained by the implicit attitude measures where, in both studies, status ratings for the L1 varieties of English speech presented for evaluation were considerably higher, and in the majority of cases significantly more favourable, when compared to the status ratings for the Japanese, Thai, Chinese and Indian English speech. Likewise, the Japanese and the UK students both tended to exhibit high levels of solidarity towards their 'local' forms of English.

Although it is felt the inclusion of both explicit and implicit attitude measures has helped shed light on the conceptual richness of social evaluations of English language variation within Japanese higher education, there remains much to be done. The findings from future comparable studies investigating attitudes towards other L1 and L2 English speech forms, in Japan and elsewhere, and amongst populations other than university students, would help clarify the findings of the present study. There also seems a particular need to further investigate the extent to which it is (combinations of) specific segmental features, rather than supra-segmental, lexical or morpho-syntactic features which index social evaluations of other forms of English speech and in turn, of other speech communities. Indeed, whilst there exists a great deal of empirical evidence to suggest that listeners do not need to correctly identify speech forms at a conscious level in order to make predicted stereotypical judgements (see Milroy and McClenaghan, 1977; Gluszek and Dovidio, 2010), the inclusion of a variety recognition instrument (McKenzie, 2008b) in the design of future language attitude studies may help researchers better understand the precise linguistic cues upon which specific populations base their (mis)identifications upon as well as potentially provide valuable information regarding the extent to which recognition, below or above the level of individual consciousness, influences speaker evaluations (for a more in-depth discussion see McKenzie, 2010, 2015). Since a number of participants' qualitative comments described L2 English speech as 'less rapid', in future equivalent studies, it would also be worthwhile to investigate whether differences between the speech rates of the samples of English texts employed influenced listener attitudes.

Moreover, given that the results of the present study appear to indicate that many of the Japanese student cohort afford low status to specific groups of overseas students from South and East Asia, and because future recruitment of greater numbers of nationals from these (and other) areas of the continent to study on courses at Japanese universities will inevitably result in more regular social contact between these students and the traditional Japanese cohort, an issue thus remains regarding the extent to which more frequent communication between the two cohorts within the university campus, presumably often involving interaction in English, may help break down negative attitudes amongst Japanese students (see Zajonc, 1980 regarding the mere exposure effect on a range of attitudes). For this reason, the results of research investigating Japanese students' language attitudes expressed in interaction (i.e., explicit, verbalisable evaluations) with other speakers of English, undertaken by means of discourse-based methods of analysis, may help provide

further information regarding the explicit attitudes found in the present study (see Liebscher and Daily-O'Cain, 2009; McKenzie and Osthus, 2011). Likewise, longitudinal research measuring potential changes in Japanese students' attitudes towards forms of English spoken in the South and East of Asia, for instance as a result of increased exposure to these speech forms, perhaps through active intervention by the Japanese universities themselves, also seems necessary.

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#### Appendix A: The semantic-differential scale

pleasant	.....	not pleasant
not clear	.....	clear
confident	.....	not confident
modest	.....	not modest
dishonest	.....	honest
clever	.....	not clever
not gentle	.....	gentle
not fluent	.....	fluent

#### Appendix B: PCA loadings of mean ratings (all traits) (N=158)

Trait	Component 1	Component 2
Honest	0.794	
Modest	0.783	
Pleasant	0.679	
Gentle	0.675	
Fluent	(0.671)	(0.395)
Confident		0.820
Clever		0.807
Clear		0.586

**Appendix C: Post-hoc Bonferroni pairwise comparisons: Status mean evaluations (N=158)**

Variety	Comparison	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Southern US English (SUSE)	MWUSE	5.245*	1.418	.006
	SSE	5.283*	1.092	.000
	JE	6.511*	1.211	.000
	TE	7.599*	1.228	.000
	CE	11.759*	1.343	.000
	IE	12.884*	1.193	.000
Mid-West US English (MWUSE)	SUSE	-5.245*	1.418	.006
	SSE	.038	1.171	1.000
	JE	1.266	1.211	1.000
	TE	2.354	1.149	.885
	CE	6.515*	1.308	.000
	IE	7.639*	1.313	.000
Scottish Standard English (SSE)	SUSE	-5.283*	1.092	.000
	MWUSE	-.038	1.171	1.000
	JE	1.228	1.163	1.000
	TE	2.316	1.075	.688
	CE	6.477*	1.248	.000
	IE	7.601*	1.165	.000
Japanese English (JE)	SUSE	-6.511*	1.211	.000
	MWUSE	-1.266	1.211	1.000
	SSE	-1.228	1.163	1.000
	TE	1.089	1.092	1.000
	CE	5.249*	1.236	.001
	IE	6.373*	1.244	.000
Thai English (TE)	SUSE	-7.599*	1.228	.000
	MWUSE	-2.354	1.149	.885
	SSE	-2.316	1.075	.688
	JE	-1.089	1.092	1.000
	CE	4.160*	1.167	.010
	IE	5.285*	1.157	.000
Chinese English (CE)	SUSE	-11.759*	1.343	.000
	MWUSE	-6.515*	1.308	.000
	SSE	-6.477*	1.248	.000
	JE	-5.249*	1.236	.001
	TE	-4.160*	1.167	.010
	IE	1.124	1.232	1.000
Indian English (IE)	SUSE	-12.884*	1.193	.000
	MWUSE	-7.639*	1.313	.000
	SSE	-7.601*	1.165	.000
	JE	-6.373*	1.244	.000
	TE	-5.285*	1.157	.000
	CE	-1.124	1.232	1.000

\*mean difference is significant at  $p > 0.05$  level

**Appendix D: Post-hoc Bonferroni pairwise comparisons: Social Attractiveness mean evaluations (N=158)**

Variety	Comparison	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Japanese English (JE)	SUSE	.690	1.121	1.000
	SSE	3.995*	1.094	.007
	TE	4.938*	1.123	.000
	CE	9.951*	1.219	.000
	MWUSE	10.570*	1.455	.000
	IE	11.139*	1.111	.000
Southern US English (SUSE)	JE	-.690	1.121	1.000
	SSE	3.305	1.105	.068
	TE	4.248*	1.002	.001
	CE	9.261*	1.212	.000
	MWUSE	9.880*	1.245	.000
	IE	10.449*	1.184	.000
Scottish Standard English (SSE)	JE	-3.995*	1.094	.007
	SUSE	-3.305	1.105	.068
	TE	.943	1.217	1.000
	CE	5.956*	1.128	.000
	MWUSE	6.574*	1.393	.000
	IE	7.144*	1.270	.000
Thai English (TE)	JE	-4.938*	1.123	.000
	SUSE	-4.248*	1.002	.001
	SSE	-.943	1.217	1.000
	CE	5.013*	1.073	.000
	MWUSE	5.631*	1.228	.000
	IE	6.201*	1.114	.000
Chinese English (CE)	JE	-9.951*	1.219	.000
	SUSE	-9.261*	1.212	.000
	SSE	-5.956*	1.128	.000
	TE	-5.013*	1.073	.000
	MWUSE	.619	1.223	1.000
	IE	1.188	1.143	1.000
Mid-West US English (MWUSE)	JE	-10.570*	1.455	.000
	SUSE	-9.880*	1.245	.000
	SSE	-6.574*	1.393	.000
	TE	-5.631*	1.228	.000
	CE	-.619	1.223	1.000
	IE	.570	1.342	1.000
Indian English (IE)	JE	-11.139*	1.111	.000
	SUSE	-10.449*	1.184	.000
	SSE	-7.144*	1.270	.000
	TE	-6.201*	1.114	.000
	CE	-1.188	1.143	1.000
	MWUSE	-0.570	1.342	1.000

\*mean difference is significant at  $p > 0.05$  level